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Status of preparations for the International Year of Mountains, 2002

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report is prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 53/24 of 10 November 1998 in which the Assembly, inter alia, requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-fifth session on the state of preparations for the International Year of Mountains in 2002. Activities at national, regional and international levels are described, and examples of specific action taken in selected countries are given. The report also explores areas that require greater attention in preparing for the Year and covers the issue of mobilizing adequate funding to implement the Year. Finally, proposals for the next steps to be taken in preparing for the Year are suggested.

The report was prepared by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in its capacity as lead agency for the Year, and in collaboration with Governments, relevant organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

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** The report has been prepared in collaboration with Governments, relevant United Nations and other organizations, and non-governmental organizations, under the overall coordination of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations as lead agency for the International Year of Mountains. The process of soliciting and compiling the inputs from those contributors required a considerable amount of time.

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I. Introduction

1. The General Assembly, at its fifty-third session, adopted resolution 53/24 in which it proclaimed 2002 the International Year of Mountains. The resolution encouraged Governments, the United Nations system and all other actors to take advantage of the Year in order to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable mountain development. It also called upon Governments, national and international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to make voluntary contributions in accordance with the guidelines of the Economic and Social Council for international years and anniversaries and to lend other forms of support to the Year.

2. The General Assembly invited the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to serve as the lead agency for the Year, in collaboration with Governments, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other relevant organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations.

3. The present report was prepared at the request of the General Assembly to report to it at its fifty-fifth session on the state of the preparations for the Year. FAO, in close collaboration with United Nations organizations and other members of the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains, and with substantial input from many Governments, has contributed to the preparation of this report.

II. Background

4. The importance of mountain communities and ecosystems has gained awareness in recent years, largely due to the ongoing broad-based effort to implement Agenda 21, the programme of action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and, in particular, its chapter 13 "Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development". Today there is increasingly widespread recognition that mountains are fragile ecosystems which are globally important as water towers of the earth, repositories of rich biological diversity, popular destinations for recreation and tourism, and areas of important cultural diversity and heritage. They are also the home of a high proportion of the world's malnourished and food insecure. Occupying about one fourth of the world's land surface, mountains provide a direct life-support base for about one tenth of humankind as well as goods and services to more than half the world's population. Consequently, there is a need to ensure the ecological integrity and economic and social viability of mountain areas, both for the sake of mountain inhabitants, whose livelihood opportunities and overall well-being are at stake, and for those living in lowland areas.

5. The decision by the General Assembly to observe an international year dedicated to mountains is a unique opportunity to consolidate and capitalize on the many efforts carried out to date to protect and sustainably develop mountain regions. It also allows for renewed and intensified commitment to continue such efforts at all levels. The Year is indeed an opportunity to celebrate mountains and the communities that ensure their sound stewardship. But the real challenge lies in being able to focus the observance on action-oriented activities that aim at long-term and

sustained efforts to improve the quality of life and environmental stability of these inherently fragile areas. Concerted action is needed to build and strengthen the institutional and human capacity to carry on with sustainable mountain development efforts far beyond 2002. Thus, the Year is meant to be much more than just a series of events and activities confined to a one-year period; it is, rather, a springboard from which to launch or reinforce long-term mountain development and conservation efforts.

6. The present report describes progress made at the national, regional and international levels in preparing for the observance of the Year. It provides information on the institutional set-up that has been established and gives details on some of the substantive work that has been carried out related to preparations for the Year. Examples of country-level action are provided. Finally, the report gives an indication of what lies ahead in the period leading up to 2002 and makes some suggestions on possible actions to facilitate preparations for observing the Year.

III. Institutional arrangements

7. Since the adoption of resolution 53/24 in November 1998, significant progress has been made in preparing for observance of the Year. At the institutional level globally, two meetings have been convened of the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains to discuss substantive and organizational issues related to the preparation and observance of the Year. The Group, made up of United Nations system organizations and other key international institutions involved in the implementation of chapter 13, has provided support and guidance to FAO, which serves as United Nations system task manager for reporting on the implementation of chapter 13 and has now assumed the added responsibility of advising on the preparation and observance of the Year. The two recent meetings of the Inter-Agency Group served to define more clearly the vision, mission and objectives of the Year and started the process of sharing responsibility among institutions for implementing the observance at regional and international levels.

8. In addition to the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains, several other institutional actors will be instrumental in preparing for and observing the Year. In accordance with the general guidelines established for the observance of international years,[1] national-level initiatives and activities play a central role and represent the key to success in implementation. The guidelines encourage countries to establish national committees or other mechanisms for preparing for, conducting and following up on the International Year at the national level. Several countries (see below) are already well advanced in setting up such national committees. National Governments and local authorities are expected to play leading roles in this regard. In addition, non-governmental organizations, civil society institutions, the private sector and especially those living in mountain communities will need to be fully engaged if the observance is to be truly successful.

IV. Networking and information exchange

9. Developing and fostering strong collaboration, cooperation and exchange of information in preparing for and implementing the Year is an important concern. Networking on mountains has advanced very significantly since UNCED in 1992,

most notably due to the establishment in 1995 of the Mountain Forum, a member of the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains, which has become the main institutional mechanism worldwide for networking on mountains. Its global membership alone has grown to around 2,000 members, with many more individuals and institutions attached exclusively to one of the regional nodes. The Forum continues to expand, mainly through a decentralized process by which regional nodes have been established in Asia/Pacific, Latin America, Africa and Europe, with a global node supporting United Nations and interregional members. A North American node is currently under development, and subregional nodes exist in several areas. The Forum has promoted increased awareness of critical mountain issues and fostered mutual support for greater action at the local level. Among its services are a comprehensive Internet site (www.mtnforum.org) which includes information on electronic conferences, discussion lists, an on-line library and documentation centre, membership contact information and an updated calendar of key mountain-related events. Although the Mountain Forum operates primarily as an electronic network, it also disseminates information through other media, including print, for those without electronic access.

10. The Mountain Forum is filling a particularly important niche in preparations for and observance of the Year by establishing and facilitating links between individuals, non-governmental organizations, Governments and other entities, in particular at the regional level. It is helping to translate overall strategies into the specific conditions of different mountain areas and to ensure that information about local experiences is made available and shared.

11. Other regional level networking mechanisms have also been playing an important role in the preparations. In Latin America, for example, the Andean Mountains Association and the Latin American Technical Cooperation Network for Watershed Management, supported by FAO, are playing active roles in mobilizing scholars, educators, researchers and practitioners to develop ideas and activities for the observance. The African Mountains Association, in close collaboration with the Mountain Forum and other partners, is playing a similar role on the African continent, as is the Asia/Pacific Mountain Network in the Asia and Pacific region. As the number of institutional players preparing for the Year grows, it will be necessary to maintain good exchange and information flow to maximize efficiency and avoid overlap and duplication.

V. Key promotional and information materials

12. The inter-agency process described above has led to several key developments in preparing for the Year. A concept paper has been prepared by FAO, as lead agency, through a fully collaborative process with members of the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains. As defined in the paper, the basic mission of the Year is to promote the conservation and sustainable development of mountain regions, thereby ensuring the well-being of mountain and lowland communities. The concept paper also describes the main objectives of the Year, namely:

(a) To ensure present and future well-being of mountain communities by promoting conservation and sustainable development in mountain areas;

(b) To increase awareness of, and knowledge on, mountain ecosystems, their dynamics and functioning, and their overriding importance in providing a number of

strategic goods and services essential to the well-being of both rural and urban, highland and lowland people, particularly water supply and food security;

(c) To promote and defend the cultural heritage of mountain communities/societies;

(d) To pay attention to frequent conflicts in mountain areas and to promote peace-making in those regions.

The paper provides a foundation for developing ideas for activities and events to celebrate the Year, and a framework for further refining of institutional, thematic and operational concerns, and defines the major core activities and fund-raising needs for the Year. Available in several languages, the paper has been widely distributed, through permanent representatives to FAO in Rome, to Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and others.

13. In addition, a brochure for the general public has been produced, to describe the basic elements of the Year and to stimulate action, especially at the community level. The brochure is now available in all of the official United Nations languages and is being widely distributed around the world.

14. The logo that has been developed for the Year is available in the public domain for non-commercial use in promoting the Year. It was developed through a participatory process that involved designs from throughout the world. It is intended to be widely used by any individual, organization or Government interested in raising awareness and publicizing events and activities related to the Year. Information on use of the logo and how to obtain it is available from FAO[2] and on the International Year of Mountains Internet site (see para. 9).

15. An official International Year of Mountains Internet site[3] has been established to inform a large variety of users, including Governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and individuals everywhere, about the Year, with updated information on events, publications and other mountain-related information. The site will be fully developed by early 2001 and will play a major role in the information campaign for the Year. Country sections are expected to be an important component of the site. The site is linked to many other Internet sites worldwide dealing with chapter 13 of Agenda 21 and mountain-related issues and strives to be fully complementary. Close collaboration in this respect has been developed with the global Mountain Forum network, which already provides important information services such as a calendar of mountain-related events worldwide. Recognizing the need to inform the many people in the world without access to the Internet, a large amount of information and promotional material is being developed through more traditional media, including print, radio etc.

16. Other promotional material will be developed as 2002 approaches to facilitate the observance, mainly at the country level. Different groups will be targeted, such as educators and school-aged children, with a view to creating greater awareness and stimulating simple but effective ideas to promote mountains and mountain communities.

VI. Other related publications

17. Several important documents and publications that aim to increase awareness and provide key information on mountain-related topics have been prepared in the context of the Year. For example, publications supported by the Government of Switzerland were prepared for the past two sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development as part of the "Mountains of the World" series, which seeks to inform decision makers and policy makers on key issues of mountain development. They deal with tourism and forestry in sustainable mountain development. In addition, a state-of-knowledge report has been developed by the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO) on forests in sustainable mountain development. The report, which identifies major gaps in knowledge and corresponding research needs, was presented at the XXI IUFRO World Congress in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in August 2000. The journal *Mountain Research and Development* has recently revised its format to provide an expanded focus on development issues and current mountain events, in addition to research. The journal will play an important role in communicating research and development information on preparations for the Year.

VII. International activities and initiatives

18. A large proportion of the biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites established by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are in mountain regions. For the Year, it is planned to produce a major publication which brings together information concerning various aspects of those sites, together with information concerning key results of major research programmes coordinated by UNESCO, such as the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Programme, the International Hydrological Programme (IHP), and the International Geological Correlation Programme (IGCP). Issues to be highlighted would include biodiversity, freshwater resources, natural disasters, cultural aspects, tourism, sustainable land use, and environmental education.

19. The United Nations University (UNU) has recently announced the launch of a new project on the sustainable development of mountain systems, the goal of which is to contribute to an improved understanding of the increasingly crucial issues facing mountain communities and environments. This initiative is being carried out in partnership with the Centre for Development and Environment at the University of Berne, Switzerland, and with the general support of the Government of Japan. Through the introduction of up-to-date methodologies and the development of strategic and applied research, it aims to enhance the capacity of local research institutions and help them find sustainable solutions within their local context.

20. The World Conservation Union (IUCN) has a number of ongoing projects in mountain areas. The World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) has nourished a network of managers, researchers and major users of mountain areas, which is planning a number of significant activities during the Year, notably in connection with the World Parks Congress, to be held in Durban, South Africa, at which mountains will be a major theme. IUCN is also planning a major programme during the first decade of the twenty-first century, bringing together aid and conservation agencies, scientists, and the private sector to develop an integrated transboundary

approach to protect and restore the watersheds and biodiversity of rivers rising in mountain regions.

21. Under the leadership of UNESCO's Diversitas programme and the Swiss Academy of Sciences, the Global Mountain Biodiversity Assessment (GMBA) is being launched at a meeting in Rigi, Switzerland, in September 2000. By 2002, this initiative will have held a series of meetings and published a status report and a book on risks and changes in mountain biodiversity, together with executive summaries for the public and experts. The assessment, which considers mountain ecosystems from the upper tree line upwards, will enhance the knowledge base and identify gaps for future research.

22. The Tropical Montane Cloud Forest (TMCF) Initiative supports organizations around the world in promoting cloud forest conservation. It is a partnership between UNEP, the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), IUCN and the UNESCO International Hydrological Programme, providing information, supporting networking, and promoting new commitments for conserving cloud forests. For the Year, the TMCF Initiative will work with organizations in regions where that unique ecosystem is found, to promote new conservation measures, and, along with a television documentary, to raise public awareness and support for the conservation of tropical montane cloud forests. A report for decision makers on the priorities for cloud forest conservation will also be produced.

23. As an important contribution to the preparations and observance of the Year, the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme (IGBP) of the International Council for Science (ICSU), together with the International Human Dimensions Programme (IHDP) of the International Social Science Council and the FAO/UNEP/UNESCO/WMO/ICSU-sponsored Global Terrestrial Observation System (GTOS), is preparing the IGBP Mountain Research Initiative. This effort strives to achieve an integrated approach for observing, modelling and investigating global change phenomena and processes in mountain regions, including the impacts of these changes and of human activities on mountain ecosystems. Another important research initiative contributing to the Year is the Global Mountain Initiative of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), a global ecoregional research programme for sustainable agricultural development in mountain areas, led by the International Potato Centre (CIP) in Peru.

24. Another major global event in the lead-up to 2002, the World Mountain Forum, took place in France in June 2000. It provided an opportunity for several hundred people representing mountain regions and communities from throughout the world to gather and discuss issues of common interest and establish networking connections for continued exchange. The meeting ended with proposals to establish a global mountain charter and a new association of people from mountain regions.

VIII. Activities and initiatives at the national and regional levels

25. Initiatives at the national and regional levels are particularly important in the preparations for and the observance of the Year. In all regions and in a number of countries intensive preparations for the Year have started at different levels. According to the United Nations guidelines for international years, national-level initiatives and activities play a central role and represent the key to successful

implementation. A number of countries have already established national committees or similar mechanisms for preparation for, celebration of and follow-up to the Year. Several country-level efforts are described in the boxes below.

A. Africa

26. In Africa, major issues, needs and activities in mountains and highlands are being progressively documented and publicized, as governmental and non-governmental initiatives take hold in various mountainous or highland areas, including the Maghreb, Fouta Djallon countries, Central Africa and Eastern and Southern Africa. The African Mountains Association (AMA) was established in 1987 with assistance from UNU to consider African perspectives on mountain ecosystems. It continues actively to pursue and inform on African mountain research and development.

27. The most significant recent development in terms of networking and collaboration has been the establishment of the African node of the Mountain Forum at a workshop of key organizations and stakeholders in August 1999. This was the culmination of a long process supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), FAO, UNEP, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF). Through an initial agreement, ICRAF will temporarily host the node at its Nairobi headquarters. Identifying adequate funding to maintain this regional network and gaining a more thorough knowledge and understanding of the institutional landscape of mountain organizations in Africa are key immediate concerns. The node is currently recruiting members from various mountain regions of Africa and is gathering information on projects, sacred mountains, available literature, ongoing research, policy and legal frameworks in different countries, development challenges, and successful interventions in mountain areas.

28. A number of important regional projects are ongoing or planned in several mountain areas of Africa, such as in the Drakensberg Mountains (Mnweni project), Central Africa (mountain gorilla tourism), Mt. Elgon (integrated conservation and development project), and the Rift Valley (conservation project).

Preparations in Morocco

Mountains cover an important part of the territory of Morocco, and they host a variety of complex land-use systems, including national parks. The country's mountain ranges are the major sources of fresh water for the entire country.

At the policy level, greater attention is being given to mountain areas, and a new project is being developed to formulate a mountain area law. The project could be the basis for the formulation and definition of a mountain policy. It has the following objectives:

(a) Development of cooperation on mountain-related issues through the exchange of information, knowledge and experiences and by taking stock of the European policy experience in this field;

(b) Establishment of a mountain policy which should stimulate analysis, discussion and action at the ministerial level;

(c) The promotion of sustainable economic and social development in mountain areas based on their richness and diversity in natural resources;

(d) Work towards the opening up of mountain areas by emphasizing their cultural richness and their economic potential.

B. Asia and the Pacific

29. In Asia and the Pacific, the vast experience available on sustainable mountain development can significantly benefit the observance of the Year. It also provides an opportunity for countries to pursue or strengthen national mountain programmes that are action-oriented and focused on producing significant and lasting results.

30. The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu, Nepal, is among the most important regional institutions in Asia involved in sustainable mountain development and the preparations for the Year. The Centre has a broad programme on sustainable mountain development in the Hindu-Kush Himalayas; hosts the secretariat of the Asia/Pacific Mountain Network (APMN), which has been operating since early 1995, has nearly 400 registered members and is the regional node of the Mountain Forum; also hosts the permanent secretariat of the global Mountain Forum network; and has defined mountain tourism and mountain women as focal themes for its observance of the Year.

31. Other current regional efforts to help prepare for the Year include work by The Mountain Institute (TMI), a global networking forum with the aim of advancing mountain cultures, preserving mountain environments and increasing sustainable livelihoods for mountain communities, especially in the Himalayas, as well as the Andes and Appalachian ranges. TMI is working with Governments and local partners to develop model projects, through field programmes in Nepal, India, and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China, which focus on the conservation of high-

priority mountain environments in the Himalayas and on opportunities for improving the livelihoods of mountain communities. Additionally, there are regional institutions and networks with the potential to make significant contributions to the Year in Asia, such as the Asian Watershed Management Network, established through a Netherlands/FAO regional project for human resource development in participatory watershed management; the International Board for Soil Research and Management (IBSRAM), and the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC), both based in Bangkok, which have very strong mountain-related activities in the Asia/Pacific region, particularly in the fields of research and education. The establishment of an international regional centre for the mountainous regions of the Caucasus has been proposed by the President of Georgia, as a contribution to the Year. The centre would formulate and coordinate programmes to promote research, education and regional development and contribute to strengthening ties between the States of the Caucasus. An initial meeting to discuss the idea is expected to be held in late 2000.

32. Mountain areas in South-East Asia and the Pacific Islands are characterized by a particularly high diversity of nature and culture and are often very fragile. They tend to be neglected in mountain-related discussions and initiatives. It is desirable that they get more attention and support in the framework of the observance of the Year.

33. Several meetings held in the region have been related to preparations for the Year. One important event was the International Symposium on Livestock in Mountain/Highland Productive Systems: Research and Development Challenges into the Next Millennium, held from 7 to 10 December 1999 in Pokhara, Nepal. At this meeting, which was truly international in scope and emphasised transregional collaboration, it was decided to make livestock and related issues a major topic in the agenda for the Year.

Preparations in China

In recent years mountain areas have been receiving higher attention on the political, economic, environmental and research agendas of China. In 1996 a national demonstration project on integrated mountain development, involving 11 different ministries, was launched in 114 counties in 30 provinces throughout China.

Although no national committee or similar structure has as yet been established, the Year is an integral part of the work programme of the State Forestry Administration for 2002. Planned activities include holding an expert meeting on strategies for integrated mountain development and the development of western China; studies on activity in selected mountain areas or watersheds; and organizing a conference.

34. In a number of countries in Central Asia (e.g., Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, and the Russian Federation) important mountain-related activities have been ongoing or have been initiated since the declaration of the Year. MAB network, in the Russian Federation has continued to be active in networking and information exchange. The *Eurasia Mountain Newsletter* was launched in

Russian, with a distribution to some 200 members. The CGIAR Programme for Central Asia and the Caucasus, based in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, has expressed interest in joining in the preparations for the Year in the region. The book *Mountains of the World: A Global Priority*[4] was translated into Russian and published in 1999 in Moscow.

Preparations in Kyrgyzstan

The proposal to declare 2002 as the International Year of Mountains originally came from Kyrgyzstan at an international conference in 1996. Accordingly, the country is very active in preparing for the Year. The Kyrgyz National Centre for the Development of Mountain Areas was established in January 1999. It consists of the International Institute of Kyrgyzstan, the Mountain International Institute, the National Foundation for the Development of Mountain Areas, the Central Asian Mountain Information Net (a regional entity), and the Mountain village project.

Kyrgyzstan has already adopted the National Programme for the Preparation and Conduct of the International Year of Mountains in Kyrgyzstan, by the Decree of the President Askar Akaev (A/54/767). Nine projects related to the mountain problems of the region were prepared with the assistance of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, UNDP and the Asian Development Bank. A regional conference, Mountains of Central Asia: Regional Aspects, was held in May 1999. On the international level, Kyrgyzstan is developing a proposal to host a major global mountain conference in 2002.

C. Europe

35. In Europe, networking on mountain issues has become increasingly active over the past few years. The European Mountain Forum, established in 1998 with support from the Government of Switzerland and IUCN, is primarily an electronic network covering mountain ranges throughout Europe. Through its decentralized structure, which includes several subregional nodes, the Forum is playing an important role in the preparations for the Year by bringing local needs and initiatives to regional attention and by assisting local institutions to initiate processes on the ground.

36. The following meetings relating to the preparations for the Year were held or are being planned:

(a) A conference organized by Euromontana, called Second European Mountain Convention. It will address the comparative advantage of the mountain regions as pioneers of sustainable development (17-18 March 2000, Trento, Italy);

(b) Third International Workshop on the Sustainable Future of Mountain Forests in Europe (2-5 May 2000, Igls, Austria);

(c) World Mountain Forum (5-9 June 2000, Paris/Chambéry, France);

(d) Alpen Forum 2000 (11-15 September 2000, Bergamo, Italy).

37. Another noteworthy initiative in Europe is Iceland's recent decision in 2000 to establish the Vatnajokull National Park. It represents a significant attempt, supported by the Icelandic Parliament and the Ministry for the Environment, to protect that important glacial landscape. The Park will cover the area of the existing Skaftafell National Park, with the possibility of expansion at a later stage.

Preparations in Italy

The Italian Committee for the International Year of Mountains was established in January 2000. Its founding members represent different parts of civil society. They include: Friends of the Mountains parliamentary group (governmental aspects); the National Union of Mountain Communities, Municipalities and Institutions (aspects regarding the development of mountain regions); the Courmayeur Foundation (judicial and legal aspects); the Ev-K^2-CNR Committee (scientific and environmental aspects); the Giovanni Angelini Foundation Centre for Mountain Studies (cultural and sociological aspects); the Duca Degli Abruzzi National Mountain Museum (aspects regarding the conservation of cultural heritage); and the Trento Film Festival (aspects of communication and cultural propagation).

The objective of the Italian Committee is to support projects and events that respect the objectives outlined by the United Nations. It promotes scheduled Italian events leading up to and during the Year and has already made significant contributions to awareness-raising within Italy by publishing an Italian edition of *Mountains of the World: A Global Priority* and by funding the Italian translation of the International Year of Mountains concept paper.

Preparations in Switzerland

Over the years, Switzerland has been a key country in supporting mountain-related activities and initiatives at both the national and international levels. Accordingly, the preparations for the Year are receiving a high priority in Switzerland. A working group consisting of members of several offices (including environment, agriculture, water and geology and development cooperation) in different departments of the federal Government, the Swiss Academy of Sciences, and the Conference of the Governments of the Swiss Mountain Cantons has developed the country's strategy for the year 2002. Exchange and solidarity will be the guiding themes for the Swiss initiatives and events related to the Year on both the national and international levels. All initiatives and activities should contribute to awareness-raising and to enhanced understanding of the concerns of mountain communities. The impact of the activities undertaken should reach far beyond 2002 and should help bridge the gap between knowledge and action.

Preparations in Germany

In Germany, the national focal point for the International Year of Mountains is the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, which coordinates the activities of the federal Government, the federal states, scientific institutions and other relevant stakeholders. As of June 2000 two coordination meetings of the Government had been held. Information campaigns, conferences, workshops and publications at the international, national and regional levels are Year activities under consideration. The next coordination meeting, to which non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders will also be invited, will take place in October 2000.

D. Latin America

38. In Latin America, the Andean Mountains Association, established with assistance from UNU and UNESCO, is playing an increasingly active role in mobilizing Andean scholars, educators and researchers to address sustainable mountain development issues. The group organized an important symposium in December 1998 in Quito, Ecuador, which in addition to its normal membership, also included a number of representatives from development and conservation organizations working at the field level. The proceedings of the meeting were published in 1999 under the title III Simposio Internacional de Desarrollo Sustentable de Montañas: Entendiendo las Interfaces Ecológicas para la Gestión de los Paisajes Culturales en los Andes. The group is an active member of the Inter-Agency Group on Mountains and has indicated that it will be planning a number of initiatives related to the observance of the Year.

39. Other regional initiatives include the Technical Cooperation Network on Watershed Management in Latin America and the Caribbean, supported by FAO, which has served over the past several years to assist Governments to exchange technical know-how and experience in watershed management. The Network has recently revised its mandate towards a more practical and field-based approach which links projects and field activities in addition to promoting exchange among governmental representatives working in this area. The Mountain Institute's Andean programmes are being implemented in Peru and Ecuador on issues such as preserving critical watersheds in the *paramos* ecosystem, mitigating negative impacts of large-scale mining, and improving sustainable livelihoods through ecotourism. They are collaborating with Governments and other partners in national Year preparations in Peru. The Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN) also continues as an important partner in the Latin America region. The regional node of the Mountain Forum, which is based in Lima at the International Potato Centre (CIP), has been active in outreach and networking and has organized or facilitated a number of e-mail conferences, including:

(a) "Rural agro-industries in the Andes and the challenges for globalization" (3 May-11 June 1999);

(b) "Improving graduate-level education on natural resource management in the Andes" (16 August-23 September 1999);

(c) "InSitu99" (3 November-20 December 1999).

40. Another initiative in Latin America linked to the Year is the organization of a Central American cloud forest conservation planning workshop, in Costa Rica in November 2000. It will bring together the leading organizations working in tropical montane cloud forest conservation in the region to identify the priorities, sites and actions required to ensure cloud forest conservation, laying the foundations for national and regional conservation strategies. Identifying actions linked to the Year in 2002 will be one of the objectives.

Preparations in Peru

Since 1999, several meetings were convened by the Directorate of the Environment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Peru, to share information about the ongoing Year activities worldwide and to promote involvement in the main events. The meetings were attended by representatives of national and international organizations who work in mountain development and environmental issues in Peru such as The Mountain Institute (TMI), the Instituto Nacional de Recursos Naturales (INRENA), the National Council for Environment (CONAM), the International Potato Centre (CIP), the Consortium for Sustainable Development of the Andean Ecoregion (CONDESAN), the National Agricultural University La Molina, and the Embassy of the Netherlands. CONDESAN/InfoAndina, as the Latin American node of the Mountain Forum, informed the participants about the progress of national preparations in other regions of the world and about Mountain Forum activities.

A Peruvian working group, under the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, discussed the possibility of starting a public awareness campaign, oriented towards children and students, to clarify the importance of mountains at the national level. It also discussed the possibility of an international event on biodiversity conservation in mountains, to be held in Cuzco by the end of 2000. The Ministry will begin seeking international support for funding this effort. Since December 1999, CONDESAN/InfoAndina has facilitated a moderated electronic discussion list for the working group — eruaim2002@topica.com — and cross-posted announcements related to preparations for the Year gathered from the Mountain Forum global lists.

Preparations in Ecuador

Ecuador is in the process of establishing its national committee for the International Year of Mountains. This is a joint initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (the Environment Department, in particular) and the Ecuadorian Mountain Society. A list of key persons who will represent different groups of people living in mountain areas is being prepared. The board members of the committee will be encouraged to propose activities for implementation during the Year. They will also help to identify sources of funding and give technical and other assistance.

The following issues are considered key topics for the preparation and observance of the Year in Ecuador:

(a) Preparation of baseline information on mountain areas in Ecuador;

(b) Water and climate change. Water supply for most of the country comes from the mountains; climate change may reduce or alter water supply;

(c) Food security. Mountain areas in Ecuador are the main source of staple food for local consumption, while most export products are cultivated in the lowlands;

(d) Health. The most studied disease is goitre. Other diseases, such as tuberculosis, which are associated with malnutrition and poverty, are also important.

E. North America

41. In September 1999, the Banff Centre for Mountain Culture in Canada, in close collaboration with The Mountain Institute (TMI) and the Mexican Indigenous Association for Sustainable Development, convened a workshop during which the groundwork was laid for a major mountain meeting for North America and for the establishment of a regional Mountain Forum node to serve Canada, the United States of America and Mexico. The workshop proposed a number of ideas for activities for the Year in the region. The Keystone Center in the United States is also working with these institutions to build a coalition of governmental, non-governmental organization and corporate partners to develop a North American network and constituency in support of Year. TMI, with regional offices in West Virginia, is active in the Appalachian range of the United States and operates field programmes focussing on research and education in mountain conservation and development.

IX. International Year of Ecotourism

42. In resolution 53/200 the General Assembly declared 2002 as the International Year of Ecotourism. The clear relationship between tourism and mountains provides an important opportunity to create and benefit from synergies in the observance of both events. The lead agencies for the observance of both International Years (FAO for the International Year of Mountains and the World Tourism Organization and UNEP for the International Year of Ecotourism) have established contact to explore how best to coordinate both events to take full advantage of the opportunity.

X. Areas in need of attention

43. Preparation for and observance of the International Year of Mountains provide an opportunity to focus attention on certain areas that may require further or special consideration. One such area concerns the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable mountain development. Although indicators for mountain areas were initially developed and discussed in the early stages of the work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development, on indicators of sustainable development, they were not included in the final list because of the requirement to focus on more general national-level indicators. The Year could help to revive consideration of a set of mountain-specific sectoral indicators and thereby provide a very useful tool for monitoring and assessing the impact of different factors on the sustainable development of mountain regions. This could involve the collection and analysis of disaggregated data at the regional, national and subnational levels on population dynamics in mountain areas, inventory of natural resources in mountain areas, data on economic output, poverty and other social indicators.

44. Other areas in need of renewed attention include:

(a) The high rate of food insecurity and malnutrition in mountain areas and lack of concerted action so far to address this serious problem in the implementation of chapter 13;

(b) Implications of the management of mountain watersheds for water quantity and quality downstream, considering that over half of the global population depends on water from mountain areas;

(c) Mechanisms for equitable sharing of benefits of services from mountain areas between downstream beneficiaries and mountain people, and research to evaluate and develop such mechanisms;

(d) The need for more adequate levels of funding for scientific research in mountain areas and the need for more innovative approaches to research that involve local communities and knowledge to a much greater extent;

(e) Culture and traditional knowledge;

(f) Gender issues;

(g) Conservation of biological diversity in mountain areas.

45. Finally, there is need to not delay in setting even clearer priorities and defining concrete activities and events to hold the observance of the Year at all levels, but especially within countries. The success of the Year, in terms of achieving the most

significant impact and long-lasting results, will depend largely on the effort and commitment made within countries to mobilize, organize and carry out meaningful and relevant activities and events to promote the well-being of mountain people and their environments.

XI. Funding considerations

46. A major challenge to the successful implementation of chapter 13 of Agenda 21 is the mobilization of adequate funding. A much broader base of bilateral, multilateral and private-sector funding and financing than has so far existed is required in order to respond to the needs of mountain regions and their inhabitants. More concerted efforts at the national level could also provide additional resources. To date, a small number of donor organizations and countries have carried most of the financial burden of mountain development assistance. In a medium- to long-term perspective, the Year will provide an opportunity to mobilize the resources, both human and financial, on a sustained level, which are needed effectively to implement sustainable mountain development and conservation.

47. To help achieve these objectives, there is need to generate sufficient funds effectively and efficiently to carry out the observance of the Year. A multi-donor trust fund proposal has been developed by FAO, in cooperation with other relevant organizations, which covers several priority areas for intervention. These include:

(a) Establishing a coordination unit within the lead agency;

(b) Developing and disseminating information packages and promotional material for observance of the Year;

(c) Providing seed money to assist countries with national observance activities;

(d) Holding technical workshops and regional consultations;

(e) Carrying out several global and regional studies and producing related publications;

(f) Supporting national programme formulation.

48. From information received up to now, it seems that existing levels of funding within the international agencies mandated to prepare the observance of the Year will not be sufficient for the tasks required. A successful observance of the Year will depend on the ability to mobilize additional financial resources. The General Assembly, in resolution 53/24, supports this effort by calling upon the various actors involved to make voluntary contributions and to provide other forms of support.

49. Although bilateral and multilateral sources will be an important part of fund-raising for the Year, clearly new and more innovative approaches are required which will look to more diversified and less traditional sources of funding and support. These include financial contributions from the private sector, philanthropic personalities and foundations; and support from well-known personalities and celebrities as "goodwill mountain ambassadors" in promoting the Year and playing a role in mobilizing funds.

50. In general, those institutions or organizations that undertake relevant initiatives are expected to take responsibility for procuring the necessary funding.

Nevertheless, a comprehensive and coherent overall fund-raising strategy is necessary to avoid overlap and make the most efficient use of available funds.

XII. Next steps

51. Significant progress has been achieved in the period since resolution 53/24 was passed by the General Assembly, both in terms of institutional arrangements and the development and dissemination of substantive information and material to prepare for the observance of the Year. Nevertheless, much remains to be done, especially at the country level, in preparing for the Year in the relatively short time remaining.

52. In this regard, the General Assembly may wish to reiterate some of the possible courses of action that could be taken by Governments, for example, to:

(a) Establish national committees for the preparation and implementation of national strategies for sustainable mountain development, using the Year as an occasion to launch programmes related to such strategies;

(b) Nominate national focal points for sustainable mountain development and for the Year, or strengthen such focal points where they already exist;

(c) Actively participate in the national, regional and global assessment of progress made in the implementation of chapter 13 of Agenda 21 in preparation for the tenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the intergovernmental review of the implementation of Agenda 21, which will also take place in 2002;

(d) Sponsor or co-sponsor initiatives and events aimed at creating awareness about the role of mountains in sustainable development at the national, regional and global levels;

(e) Assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the formulation and implementation of national strategies for sustainable mountain development, through bilateral, multilateral, and South/South channels of cooperation, as well as through non-traditional arrangements;

(f) Invite civil society and the private sector to participate actively in the formulation and implementation of national strategies for sustainable mountain development and in initiatives aimed at creating awareness about mountain issues in relation to the Year;

(g) Encourage the consideration and further development of mountain-specific indicators that may be relevant for use by countries with extensive mountain ecosystems.

Notes

[1] See Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67.

[2] E-mail contact: info@mountains2002.org.

[3] www.mountains2002.org (English); www.montagnes2002.org (French); and www.montagnas2002.org (Spanish).

[4] B. Messerli and J. D. Ives, eds., *Mountains of the World: A Global Priority* (New York, Parthenon, 1997).